

¹CLAUDIUS BANKS

Tape #210

Interviewed by Joe Winder, 23 March 1989
Transcribed by Marilyn Hunting, 27 June 2001

Joe Winder (JW): Tell us who you are, when you were born, where you were born.

Claudius Banks (Claude): I'm here with my good friend Joe Winder. We've been friends ever since I can remember. I've been around here just about eighty years come this June. I was born in Dragon, Utah, June 27, 1909, a Sunday morning according to my friends. I don't remember much about the first two or three years of my life, but the first thing I remember I got a lickin' for was running across the railroad track over in Watson when the train was approaching. Well, I survived that licking and I guess I didn't remember it too well because about the next year I decided I was going to paint the house. My father had some black paint, so I get that out and started on the house. He was about two blocks away and he could see this spot and that small of a child getting a little bigger. So he headed my direction and I got a lickin' for that. Well, I behaved pretty good about the paint, but it still tempted me a lot so I decided to paint my brother one day. I painted him up like a Negro and that put the finishing touches on and I got a lickin' that time that I remembered. I didn't try that paint thing again.

Stayed in Watson 'til I was about eight years old. By that time, they had run out of schools for their children. There wasn't enough people that age, so my father decided he would have us move to Vernal. We moved to Vernal that fall when I was eight years old. I was put in school at that time. We went in the old Willcox Academy. It was on first east and first north. Some of the buildings are still there. I went there for my third, fourth and fifth grade, then I went down to Central for a year, then back to Willcox for the seventh, then from there I went to the high school. If I remember, the high school at that time was named the Uintah Academy. After the first year I was there, they built a new high school just south of where the Uintah Academy was. I stayed there 'til the eleventh grade.

While in Vernal, I enjoyed myself like most kids: going swimming. We had two or three old swimming holes along Ashley Creek. One I remember particularly, called the Bridge Hole. That was a pretty good-sized one, down below Soderquists. We'd go down there and see who could swim under the water the farthest or dive out of a tree. We survived that without too much trouble. We did go around in the hills nearby and find arrowheads at that time; we had quite a collection. Also found those Indian mills. They were very plentiful in the hills north, especially up around where Steinaker Lake is now. I think I brought about thirty-six of those home. At that time they didn't bother you too much about picking up stuff that was out in the hills. There wasn't any restrictions. Somehow or another, all of those disappeared. My sister, Helen, has one left today.

Well I'd got along by 12 years old pretty good. By that time I'd joined up with the Boy Scouts Troop, with a leader by the name of Leo Thorne. He started me out in the scout work. It was quite tough in those days to become even a Tenderfoot. If you got to be a First Class, well,

I'll tell you, that was something, because we didn't have all the fancy things. People knew about doing things, we were pretty limited in what we had accessible. But anyway, they made sure we did all of them and it took a long time to climb up the ladder. I did manage a few merit badges during that time. I never did quit the scout work. I stayed with that for sixty years, doing odd things for them, like, I'd watch the window displays or whatever they had, some little old, odd job they thought I could do. I was willing to do it. But I thought that was pretty good time to stay in one profession.

Well, I was getting along pretty well in high school now, so by the time the 11th grade come along, I didn't participate too much in sports. I got so I could run a little bit. I didn't do too well there, but I was pretty active and I could run pretty fast. I hadn't had too many accidents. I had been pretty well up until that time. I had had my tonsils taken out and had a wreck with an ax on one leg. Kind of slowed me down and couldn't run quite as fast. Anyway, later on I got so I was pretty good.

Well, when the 12th grade come along, I don't know, my father decided that maybe I oughta go to Salt Lake. I didn't want to leave 'cause I had all my friend here in Vernal. In those days you did what your parents said, or else. They were the chief boss; we didn't dare talk back. You took the command and went ahead and did it and loved it. Anyway, I was taken to Salt Lake, out to Westminster College and finished up high school there. I played basketball. I didn't ever play in Vernal, but out there I managed to get on their team and did pretty well at it. Also went one year there in their college. They had a Jr. college. That year all the family moved to Salt Lake and the rest of us went to school there. Then I went on up to the University of Utah and got my degree and finished up there in 1932. The rest of the family stayed in Salt Lake and I came back.

In the meantime, my father had a trucking and grocery business out here in Watson, a terminal where the railroad ended at that time to haul the Gilsonite out of the Basin. He happened to have the contract there to haul it down from Rainbow to the railroad terminal, also from Bonanza. Also worked with his good friend, Luvie Jacobsen. I worked there in the summertime and would get enough money to go back to school in the wintertime. I did that for about three summers and by that time I had finished up.

I didn't do anything more particular than what other young boys did in their life, I guess, started watching the girls.

JW: Claud could we go back and have you describe the town of Watson, what it looked like and what went on there?

Claude: I'd be happy to do that. If you'd go there now, you would only find one thing left: an old cement place they had there along Evacuation Creek to keep from washing out the road. That would be the only way you could tell there was ever a town there. At that time when I was a young person over there, must have been about sixty or seventy people out there.

They had a large warehouse, there at the terminal by the railroad, where they brought in most of the supplies and things that come to the stores here in Ashley Valley. They were trucked over on what we thought were large trucks at that time. Also, many of the people here had teams and wagons and they freighted a lot of that stuff in from there. In addition to that, we had the Watson Post Office. Before we moved to Vernal, there was a school. They also had the garage where they repaired the trucks and automobiles and things that run on the stage line that come over from Vernal. They had a telephone office and they had living quarters, their homes, for

different ones scattered around there, that lived within a short area there. It was all pretty well jumbled all up together and right in the center of town there was two, great big bridges that kind of separated the town. One was used for the railroad and the other used for the pedestrians and for the traffic, in those days, wagons and what few cars there were. That was about the size of the town. They were all right there in a little area.

Today if you happen to go look, there is a couple of buttes, rocks, big rocks out to your right as you're driving southeast. You can tell, that is a good marker to show that you are in the area close to where Watson was. It was in a shale-y, hilly area. When we first were there, there was plenty of rattlesnakes, then the sheep herders, they come—a lot of sheep and things like that around.

The Indians came, too. I remember when they used to come in the spring and the fall, and they would bring some of their items to trade there at the store, like deer, they would bring those. The whites weren't allowed to kill them, but they were allowed to pick them up and bring [them] in for, I guess you would call it wampum, or whatever, so they could trade and get more items. I remember the Indians liked soda water. Boy, if there was any soda water there, you run out in a hurry. They all liked it. They would camp and be right there among the people in town. Some of the prominent ones you would read about now, like Chief Ouray and his wife, Chipeta, I remember them very well when I was a child. I used to even sit there in camp and eat lunch with them.

We had a good time there in that community, very active, even had church and Sunday school on Sunday. Then they had a lot of entertainment, dances at the school house or even the garage over there, some activity going that kept us all close together. We knew each and every one of us and what everybody did, all the kids, even their dogs and animals.

The Indians would come by. At Dragon they would have what they called their Bear Dance and Sun Dance up there. I got to see quite a few of those in the early time when I was real small. The white people, I remember my Dad getting in, and would dance with the Indians on some of their dances. They would come and pick you up and you had better dance with them. If you were there, that was the law at that time, that you would dance and enjoy yourself with the Indians. You didn't have to pay anything, the Indians furnished everything. In about three or four days after all that dancing, day and night, they would have a great big feed. I remember a barbecue—two or three beef carcasses and everything else to go with it. Then they'd eat and eat until everybody got to sleep. They would sleep for a couple of days afterwards, if I remember right. It was quite a trip.

JW: Do you remember the fire, the Black Dragon there?

Claude: Joe is talking about an explosion that happened at the Black Dragon Mine. That was the first claim that they worked in that part of the country, however Gilsonite wasn't discovered there. That was the first claim. There were a couple of Greeks that went down there and they supposed that... You weren't supposed to carry any matches or anything like that around Gilsonite because it is highly explosive. They think these two fellows took some of that, either tobacco or matches or something, and lit them while the mine was kind of full of the Gilsonite dust and caused the explosion. Those two Greeks were killed and their bodies weren't recovered until, I think it was about a year and a half after the explosion. That was the first fire and trouble that they had out there in that mine.

JW: Could you tell us about where you lived in Vernal and who used to own that house.

Claude: Well, when we moved to Vernal, we still have the home. My sister, Helen, still lives there today. We bought that from... She didn't build the house, the person that used to have a saloon here in Vernal by the name of Overholts. They had a saloon on First West and Main and that property where that house is today, joined that. Mrs. Overholt, she built that home and then she sold it to a person by the name of Aunt Cora Johnson, that would have been Warren Belcher's grandmother. We bought the home from them and we kept it until today. That is where that home originated from was through this saloon operator.

JW: Can you give a description of the saloon property? Was it still there when you lived there?

Claude: The old saloon property was still there and Prohibition had come in at that time and the saloon had been closed. But you know how old buildings and things stand around and kids knock out a few windows, and after while they get a door loose; and 'course as kids, we played in that old building. There wasn't any liquor or anything like that left, but the old bar was still there and a lot of the drawers and cupboards and all those kind of things was still in that old building. It stayed there, oh, remnants, for a long, long time. Then there was a family by the name of Galbreaths, moved in the back of it; they kind of made a living quarters there; they stayed there until 1934 or 1935, I think. Utah Oil bought the corner and they built a service station there and that stayed there for years and now we have the Interstate Bank at the present time.

JW: There used to be a brick storage place there, wasn't there? Kind of at the back?

Claude: That's correct, Joe. That belonged to part of the old original saloon. That's the part where the people I just mentioned, the Joe Galbreaths, restored for living quarters for a number of years. That's what that was.

JW: That kind of takes us back to where you were when you graduated from college. Did you come back to Vernal?

Claude: Oh yes. I was to Vernal, in and out, all the time, still worked for my father. In the meantime he'd got into the sheep business, too. It was more or less of a family thing, so we all helped in that, especially my brother Bus. Then I come back and worked there about a year longer with the trucks there at Watson and Bonanza. Like I said, my mother and them was away in the wintertime. It was about 1936 before all the family was back in Vernal. In 1935 I had a government job offered to me with the Dept. of Commerce. I thought maybe I ought to take off in life a little bit and see what that's like. I took the job and left. I traveled all over the United States, forty-six states, doing this job. It was kind of like a purchasing job, that is, the head office would give me these contracts and I would work them up for bids and they would put them out and I would turn them in and we would use the best prices. We would buy everything from gasoline, tires, surveyor's equipment, you name it, all the stuff was necessary to be traveling around, even the trucks and the automobiles.

I liked the work, but the only thing I kind of got tired about was, you was on the go all the time. You wasn't settled too much and it didn't look like it was too much of a future at that

time. I did meet some prominent people, several of the state governors throughout and senators around the country. It was interesting that way. Finally, I decided maybe I should come back home. So I did that and I worked out there with my Dad out there another year. By that time, the Uintah Railway, they decided to do away with it. [It was] to the point to where it couldn't operate profitable due to the slides on Baxter Pass—not snow slides, dirt slides. The whole mountain would slide and they couldn't get the tracks put back. It was too expensive. So then they started hauling the Gilsonite. Moved everything from Rainbow and Watson and all that area to Bonanza. It remains today and Gilsonite is shipped from there all over the world.

In the meantime, I quit that and come back to Vernal and decided to get into the service station business. I got into that with a station owned by Conoco. Harmon Sowards was the distributor. It was on Main and Vernal Avenue. The old portion of the lot stands today. It was kind of a three-tier structure, not stories, but was made in three big loops, areas that looked like a big opening there. We had these three entrances; it didn't take in much area, but was pretty good size for those days. It got the name "Cobble Rock" several years before I got it. The reason for that was that all these tiers, or these openings that I'm telling you about, were all faced with cobble rock. It was quite an unique building. If you once saw the thing, people would always remember it, and they remembered it in Vernal.

I stayed there for quite a number of years and worked in Vernal and got involved in a few little things in Vernal. About that time, 1940, people started being shook up and a little worried about the war and it looked like we were going to get into it. It wasn't long 'til we were and then they started causing all the boys to enlist. Well, they required that. So I enlisted. I stayed with that station 'til I got my call. By March 1942 I was on my way for the Army.

JW: Just to go back to 1939, could you explain how they made that film of the Vernal area?

Claude: Joe reminded me. At that time we put on what we called an advertising program or something to try and make some money. They took several possibilities. The one that he mentioned is the one of a film company. I remember very distinctly. I was in the Lions Club at that time and they decided to have these people come and take pictures of our valley and all the business places and the surrounding territory and the whole thing; and put into a moving picture, which was something pretty new at that time: to have your own individual movie or picture.

They come out here and signed a contract with the Vernal Lions and the group on how to do it and the same time have the Lions make some money. What they did, they went around and contacted every business and sold them so much footage for showing so much about their business and what they did. Then you paid for this. 'Course they took in the motels, the service stations and most all the business places and then some of the farms around town, individuals, they didn't miss a lot. They pretty well got it all together. The only sad part about it is the film you see now is only half of it. They lost several of the reels that were not in it. I don't know whatever happened to them, but they did manage four or five of them on this picture that you see now. That's how that came about. The Vernal Lions Club were trying to have some kind of a project to where they could make a little money. It turned out pretty good. I think one of the Hacking boys happened to discover those films in one of the theaters here in Vernal and they were on their way to the dump and he happened to inquire what they were. I think they just told him he could have them to find what they were. He found out that was what it was, those films from way back there, or we wouldn't have had any record of that.

JW: That is a good record of our little old town.

Claude: That's right, it is. It is something that shows everything about that time and how it's changed and how it's built up and the people at that time. There is very few around that can tell you who a lot of those people are in that film. Even now.

JW: Can you tell us about when you went in the Army, 1942, wasn't it?

Claude: March 8th 1942. I remember that day. There were about forty of us that left from the Basin on the bus. Picked up several on the way; so when we got to Salt Lake we had about forty. We stayed up at Fort Douglas a few days, kinda getting oriented a little bit. Find out who we were and what we did in life. We were sent to California, about 1200 of us. They were distributed throughout the state. I finally wound up with a supply—gas—similar to what I was doing in civilian life. Gasoline-related petroleum supplies. I got into a company like that.

In the meantime, before I really got with that, they wanted to do a couple of other things and I wasn't too anxious about doing it, although, I was a pretty good skier through my life. They wanted me to get into what they called the Mountain Troops. I was a little reluctant about that. I got to thinking about the cold weather and other things and, too, you'd probably be right on the front lines. I figured my chances of surviving that Army's not so good.

So, there was another option. Before I got in the Army, there was a group of us here that bought an airplane here in Vernal. There's not many of them left now. I think Chuck Henderson's about the only one that's left. There was Hacking, Dutch Hazelbush, both [Tom] Karren and Fran Feltch. There was about ten of us in on that airplane. We got so we could fly pretty good. They thought I might be a pretty good pilot for flying a small plane, landing in and out of places. Well, I kind of talked them out of that, too. I stayed with that gasoline outfit all through the years.

So, from California we took off from there after basic training and went back to Fort Dix, and we were back there for just a short while. Believe it or not, I was on my way overseas before I knew how to carry a rifle or what it was all about. I guess they figured we knew a little about it, bein's most of us had been in this petroleum supply products beforehand. Anyway, it worked out all right, we were loaded up in Fort Dix and were on our way across the sea.

We were out on the ocean about forty-five days. I never could figure why didn't go direct across, but they were kind of waiting for us to come in behind the forces there at Casa Blanca, in Africa. That is where we landed. We set up our supply depots there. There was an enormous amount of stuff. I had never handled gasoline and petroleum products.... At home I figured them in gallons or quarts or pints. There, we figured them in tons. It was unbelievable the amount that was used and how we used it and what we did with it.

Anyway, I followed the Army all the way up through there in several places, through Africa, clear to Tunis. I managed to get to Jerusalem one time. One kid was from Jerusalem and his parents were there and I lucked out. We got to fly up there with the Army, got to go there one weekend; then I was back there in Tunis. From there, we went on over to Sicily and we stayed over there a couple years, getting ready, getting all the gasoline put in five-gallon cans or drums or however it was needed, getting ready for the invasion to go into Europe.

*** Going into Europe, getting into there, wasn't near as tough as it was going into Italy and France, as it was trying to get into Africa. I don't know if we were more experienced or knew more what we were doing or if the Germans and Italians were getting tired. One or the other.

I was more or less lucky in the Army. I had a few close calls, and the Lord must have been with me, because I don't think I could have made a second run and made it back. We went into Italy and I stayed there about a year. The last part of the thing, it wasn't too hard on me. I was usually in office work there. I didn't have to get out in the field or go up to the front like I did at first carrying gas supplies. That was good experience for me. I found out a whole lot more on how to put glass signs up fast on those, what we called those portable lines that we could build. I remember one time we built over thirty miles of line in one day. That's building a lot of pipe line to put gas through. A lot of places we had three or four different kinds. Like, we'd run diesel fuel and maybe gasoline, then there'd be other products that we'd run through these lines.

We had a lot of trouble with sabotage with some of the enemies. They'd get in and drill holes in them or blow them up. We lost one whole train full of gas one time, in fact, two different times, there in Italy. They'd drop the bombs on the train before it got out of the yard. We also had a close call there in Africa when we were going through Gaserine Pass. We got through. I remember we took about five millions gallons of gasoline in five-gallon cans, then the Valley below them decided to attack up there behind us. Well, I thought that was the end. We got back and it took us a whole year to get back up and get to where we were after that setback.

In the meantime, like I said, I got over into Italy. That's where I finished up. I got to come home from there. Two of the same boys come back with me as I went in, that was inducted into Fort Douglas. They were the only two out of the seventeen. Out of the seventeen of us that went that day, there was only thirteen come back, and I wasn't in a fighting organization.

After I got out of the Army, I come back to Vernal and got into the service station business and started that over again. I talked to Jess Cheney, he was there in the bank. He said, "Well, do you want to do that again?" I said, "Yeah, I guess so. I made a little money at it. Maybe I could start off again." About that time I thought I might get married.

Then I'd been doing a few other things in my lifetime that I didn't mention before. I got to be a pretty good skier. I was about one of the best in the state at one time. I was pretty famous over that; I was known around the world. It consisted of lights on your skis, small electric lights.

Skis LIGHTS??on your body or suit; there was a harness that was made for that, also lights on the pole, also lights on the helmet. The original suit had over 150 lights on, then it had rocket launchers and things fixed like that on the helmet to shoot different kinds of Roman candles or rockets off the top as you were coming down the mountain, which was quite a spectacular sight for people to see at night. There was quite a demand for that through the years. Finally, I settled for Steamboat, Colorado, a ski area there. They put on a big winter carnival every year. I decided to keep that for them. So, more or less, that is what I did every winter was prepare for that. In the meantime, I practiced how to do it. I did different things through the years, that is, I made different things to place on the mountain, like the American flag, reindeers, boat, steamboat, letters, howdy, welcome, good-bye, all kind of things like that made out of letters at night that you could see clear over in town.

Then I had what you called electric slalom poles that different skiers carried. Had what they called the moving slalom, I'd ski around that while the skiers were skiing down the mountain at night. It turned out pretty good. All this got started pretty well before the war. So when I come back, I picked that up, too. I took it to Steamboat in 1936 and the first time it was a show and they come to see it. Then they wanted to get it going, so then we built a regular night show where we had a lot of people doing a lot of different stunts and things at night. That started the show and I did it for fifty years up there, 'til I got too old, then my son Jon took it over. But

the tradition still goes on today and we really elaborate on it now. My son has it all wired up to where it is all electronic controlled. He can shoot off all different rockets as he comes down and they're set to come on at a certain time, all the modern, high-tech stuff. 'Course, it comes natural, he's an electrical engineer and he has really elaborated on that and has it fixed up now so that it is all computerized and really some show.

I remember the first run I made with it. The fireworks, I thought, was a terrible price. It cost me three dollars for two dozen Roman candles. Today, when we come down, we shoot a thousand dollars of fireworks and we use five hundred dollars on each run. That goes to show you what's taken place price-wise. 'Course there is a lot more different kinds of fireworks, all the new stuff, but in those days, what I had, that's what I used. Those two dozen cost that amount of money. It's unbelievable, but we do still have that show going on and I guess as long there is a Banks around, somebody will do it. One time three of us did it. We had three lighted men on the mountain. Kent moved away and I figured I was getting too old, so I kind of got out of it. But Jon still carries that on 'til today.

Then getting around to skiing again, we'll take a break with it. Some of you probably remember up here, head of Steinaker, there is a hill they call Banks Hill, just as you get to the head and look to the south. I cleared all that off by hand, helped with a very few, and that's where I taught my kids to ski and if anybody else wanted to ski, they could ski there, too. Had a rope tow, couple of them, and I still have those today where I pulled them up the hill there. We had quite a big time there for several winters. In fact, we put on a night show up there one time, also up there, that the Andersons had at Grizzly Ridge, we put on two night shows up there. Some people will remember. We're pretty well known around for that. There has been write-ups in several ski magazines and we've been on national television a few times and several other things that have taken place through our lives. Lots of write-ups and different things about the lighted man. "The lighted man from Steamboat Springs." Hope we carry that tradition on.

I have been an avid skier. I still ski to this day. This winter I lucked out again and got to ski about three days a week, which made it pretty good. I skied at Steamboat and attended all the carnivals. I've only missed one in all the years. I skied at Alta, Park City, sometimes I go down to the Vail and over to Aspen and those places. still keep that in my mind, feel like I'm really lucky that I can do those things.

Well, I'll get back to where I left off there in about 1946. That was the year I got married. I married a girl from Texas that I met through a skier friend in Salt Lake. Our family consists of three boys and one daughter, the daughter still lives here. The boys have kind of branched out, I don't know, they didn't stay in Vernal. They turned out to be pretty good. The oldest, Jon, he's an electrical engineer. He was in Steamboat and headed up their electrical department for the skier area for several years, but now he is in Elko, Nevada, an engineer out there. Heads up a deal for one of the mining companies.

My son, Ronnie, he's the most successful one. He got into the computer business early and he's really made something out of it. He has his own business and about 15 people working for him. He lives in San Diego. He travels around the world. One day I'll hear from him in Tokyo, the next day New York, and the next time, I don't know where. He's really been successful. I hate to say it, but he's my first millionaire and then some. Brag on Ronnie a little bit.

Kent, he's the youngest one, he's a carpenter down here in Las Vegas. He has his own business and I wanted to run him out. I didn't think that was a good place for people to live, but he's doing alright. I'm proud of my sons, they've done a great job. Only daughter, lives right

next door to me, Claudia Ann, and she's here in Vernal and works for an oil company. Married Lane Fletcher.

After that, most of married life I was here in Vernal. Then the service station and all that stuff kind of slowed down a little bit, so my wife nagged at me a little bit and thought, well, maybe get out of that, you're not getting much. She said, "I'd still rather have you to stay around here and do something, so the family can be together." I had never worked for anybody else, not really. I've always worked in the family business or for myself, practically. So the opening come along and something I'd never done in my life, but the Chief of Police. I'd never even thought of ever being a police officer. I thought, well, I might be able to get along and handle that kind of a job. At that time I was the only person in the state of Utah, believe it or not, that had a degree from a university that was in law enforcement. Along with that degree, it wasn't in law enforcement, it was in business, but I did have a minor in human relations and physiology. I thought, by golly, I could work with people, maybe I can handle that job, do that part of it. So I went over and talked to the city council and they said, "Yeah, we'll give you that job. You can take it, when do you want to start?" Somebody had resigned; I don't know who it was, they had been without a chief for quite a while.

By the way, in the meantime, I had been a city councilman for about four years, too. So I knew a little about the problems of the police department. So I said, "Well, I'm not too interested in taking the thing for very long. Maybe I could help them out." They said, "Well, that's all we need. Why don't you just take that job for a year or two and see what you can do with it?" "Okay, that'll be fine." So, I took that thing, and I'll be jacked if I didn't stay there twenty-two years. I retired from there, believe it or not.

I had my ups and downs with that department, but I think Vernal enjoyed a pretty crime-free time at the time. I tried to run it right and tried to make the people like me and tried to have a good department. I think through that area, if you'll check, I'm not bragging, but it's going to be one for somebody. It's going to be hard in the meantime for them to follow up and keep up because I think we did have a good city.

The kids were good, they respected the law at that time and to this day those kids now, they are older, come to me and say, "Hey, you know, you did a lot for me during my lifetime." I'd say, "What did I do?" "You remember that time you took time out to take to me or come to the folks' house and talk?" I'd say, "Yeah, I think so." "Do you remember that time you gave me that ticket for speeding or running a stop sign, I didn't have any of it really too serious?" I'd say, "Yeah. I remember some of that stuff." "That did more for my life than anything I ever had happen in my life. I never had anybody in my lifetime that did that for me. That one little bit turned my life around." I said, "Well, I can't believe that."

You know, I had several, not one but several, tell me that very same thing. You know that really made me feel good and that's really paid off in my life. To think I did that little bit to make people either be good citizens, I don't think they were so bad, but anyway it turned them around and seemed to put them on the right track. And to this day, they come to me and still talk about some of the things. If I'm going up the street, everybody calls me Chief. I still go by that name in Vernal. I don't know what the knew chief goes by, probably they don't even know who he is. But they know me when I'm walking up the street. I've got a lot of good friends and it's been a great, great town.

I've seen a lot of changes through the years. There isn't very many buildings left on Main Street [from] when I was a kid. I think about the only one that's really there is the old Penney's area, and it was known as the Ashley Co-op when I was a kid. It still remains, that

group of buildings on that side, nearly up to the Commercial Café, nearly. Some of that has been taken out because they used to have the old Commercial building in there before they built what they called the old Commercial Hotel.

That all changed, all the alleys are gone, they used to have these alleys where you could go in with the old teams and things, they'd be tied in the back. Gasoline pumps were on the main part of the street. Right out in the street. I remember them being right there where Penney's is today and they were down there where that furniture store's at on South Vernal and up where the old Chevrolet, where Bradshaw's is now, or was, they had gasoline pumps there. It seems like, that one time in about 1930 to '40, that's all Vernal was, was gas stations on every corner, practically. Except two, there was some kind of a gas station or an automobile business.

JW: Can you remember the watering trough along by John Pope's old garage?

Claude: Yes, used to have that down there. There was a hitching post there. I can remember hitching posts on Main Street. Can you, Joe, in front of the old Penney's building? There used to be a hitching post there. The alleys were full of them. The teams would come to town. You didn't see many cars in the early days. There were more teams parked around than there were automobiles. Really.

I've traveled a lot. I've been retired fifteen years, I've really enjoyed it.

JW: What have you done during your retirement?

Claude: I've managed to keep busy. I think that is the main thing. The only thing that kind of shook me a little bit—I did have a heart attack and had to have open heart surgery. Fortunately, I recovered from that. That's been better than ten years ago. Since I retired, I've kept active with different things.

For ten years I've worked as I've wanted to, down at Basin Auto where Frank Couture and now John Smith has it. I've worked there kind of as a part-time salesman, sold parts and did various things for them. More or less I did it right on my own. I wasn't tied down. If I wanted to go for two weeks, I could. If I worked three days, I could. It was a job in a lifetime a person could get. Along with that, I got an organization going called the Good Sams. It's a traveling group; they have trailers, motor homes, etc. They go on trips close by, maybe a few miles or might go several miles. It's a national organization. It also has a state setup and also a local. I kind of more or less ramrodded that thing through most of its history. I've taken a lot of good trips and visited around the country.

Also, I fell in love with the motorcycles again. I've had them all my life, but by golly, it seems like I had to get to riding those things again. I guess, since I've retired I've rode a hundred thousand miles. I've got two big ones in the garage here now and figure on another one. I take trips on them. One trip I took was 6,000 miles; I took that alone. I ride nearly every day. In fact, I rode up the mountain and back today. It is just something that has rejuvenated me. It seems like if I can get on one of those motorcycles, it does something to me that keeps me going. I keep busy doing something, I either walk, exercise, or build something. Do something to keep occupied, I think that's what kept me a going. My health is not really the best, but it's good enough to keep me going to do these things.

I still don't fly airplanes, but I did those. My mother used to get mad at me every time she'd find out I was up in the air. Like I mentioned, we bought that airplane back, you know.

She was always after me. Dad, he never did say much, but I remember she was always after me. Says, "I wish you'd stay on the ground."

JW: I wonder how you came to be called Dr. Sallenger?

Claude: Oh, good night, I meant to pick that up while I was going to school. That's one of the highlights of my life, that Doc Sallenger name. I'll tell you how it all come about. There was three of us. We run around quite a bit at the high school. Sad to say, one of us is gone. His name was Leland Rasmussen. He was one of the Doc Sallengers. My good friend, Joe, here, was the other one and I made up the third one. I don't know; I often tried to figure out where we got the Doc Sallenger. part from or how it was all put together. Anyhow, we were at school and if we happened to meet up there, well, "Doc Sallenger!" It would turn heads and no more said about it. "Wonder what's the matter with those guys?" If we saw another one, it was "Doc Sallenger!" It was just a little thing we had going between us. You know it has gone through life with us, that name. Every time we meet it's, "Doc Sallenger!"

But then we really finalized the thing and really got it going. The first time we really got together after we started calling "Doc Sallenger," the school had a picnic or an outing down where the Green River Gorge is. The school all went down there for a weekend. Well, my dad had got an old Model T Ford that you cranked to start. We decided, the three of us, to go down there and stay overnight. So we got our stuff put together and all, what bedding we had, I don't think we had a tent, I think we just slept out in the open down there. But that was quite a trip down there in those days, to go that far in a car. As I remember it, there wasn't much of a road. After you got past Jensen and going up around Dinosaur, there was an old narrow road up around the river there. Going from the Dinosaur over to Green River Gorge, I'll tell you that was a turkey trail. Remember, we just wound around every tree going over there. Well, when we got over there, most of them stayed down in the flat where the campground is today. I don't know, we went down there first and we decided we'd rather be by ourselves than be with all the bunch. So we decided to go back up in the trees, back there a ways in the canyon. That's where we stayed that night. We cooked our mulligan, I don't know all, our breakfast, we had a great time. Of course, all the names we called ourselves was "Doc Sallenger." So, that went with us through the years; that's how that happened to get started. We've always used. It has stayed with us.

JW: Can you remember any of your teachers, out to Dragon or here?

Claude: Yes, I remember the first teacher I had, the second I had at Dragon. The first teacher, I was in the first grade and her name was Miss Neatham. The second one I had, everyone would remember her, was Martha Nelson. She lived down here in later years. She was a sister to Sue Watson. She was my second teacher and she was a dandy. Well, that's when I moved to Vernal. Third grade teacher, probably I can remember, there was a person by the name of Downey come here and he was the minister over here at the Congregational Church and his wife, the two of them, and he taught. Then he had a daughter that come and she taught. Remember, her name was Mildred. Then there was a woman by the name of Pottenger and a fellow by the name of "Bloody Thomas" that come, kind of an athletic teacher. There was two or three of them there that I remember. Mrs. Leo Thorne, she taught there. Also Henry Schaefermeyer's wife, Helen, she taught over there. Believe it or not, she did. Then when I got down to Central, there was a

fellow by the name of Mr. Olsen, Norman Olsen. I thought a lot of him. He was my teacher there.

I got up to the high school, there was a Morrill, Lundell, Calvin Marshall was one, there was a Tate that was one, Swenson was one, Romney was the coach, Golden Romney. I remember him very well. I'll have to tell you something about him.

One of the things I forgot about in my life story: I had the first radio in town. I built them. I built several different kinds. I had this station and people would come and listen here through old headphones and you could hardly hear. People would come and listen to election news, in fact, I got the returns through that. But the reason I remember that Romney, he wanted me to make a set for him. "Well, I can make one if you can help me get the stuff." So we managed and got the things and I made him a little radio so he could sit at night and listen to that. But I made radios for years and years and years. They really worked pretty good for the time. I got pretty well known for the radio business around. I just about forgot about that.

'Course I liked to hunt and fish and do things like that, and hike around. I didn't mention that, but I did do a lot of that when I found the time. I was interested in that, came by it quite naturally. My dad was quite a hunter and quite a shot. So, we all fell in line for those things.

JW: Did you hunt out around Dragon and Rainbow?

Claude: Well, we did a little out in there but most of the hunting, Joe, was done here in the valley when we had so many quail and pheasants and then on the mountain for deer. Hunted a lot in Colorado up at the ranch, we had a lot of area we could hunt in, which was great.

JW: Did you run up on the Flattop?

Claude: Yes, that is where we run the sheep, was Flattop; clear down around above Meeker there on the White River. We run from there clear up above Trappers Lake. We had a ranch there for years above Meeker. We had seven miles of that river, clear to the Flattops. It was a great place to go and stay.

JW: Does Barbara still own that?

Claude: They pretty well got out of that. Sold most of that stuff up in there. That ranch and stuff they had. She lives in Grand Junction now. have two sisters and myself. That's all that's left of the original family. Barbara, Helen and myself.

JW: Your sister, Helen, taught school, I guess, for thirty years.

Claude: Yes, she taught most of her life here. Bus ran the sheep most of the time. We helped, but he was more or less the ramrod that did most of the work. My mother's name was Anna. Anna King Banks. She came from Texas. Her mother moved here when she was a young girl. Lived over here on the corner of Second East and First South. My Grandmother McNaughton lived there. How the McNaughton name came in: she married—my mother's father died, he come in here as an Army officer in Fort Duchesne. He died and then later years her mother married Mr. McNaughton. That's how Taft and those people come into the family.

JW: Stan King, would they be related?

Claude: They would be related on my mother's side. Her brother was Stan's father.

JW: Darrell King, he was a great basketball player. In fact, all of those Kings were good.

Claude: I still enjoy life. The travel, ride the motor bikes. I'm not really what you call a religious person, but I study the Bible enough that I think I can tell people a few things about it, too. I've tried to live a good life, love people, like people, and be friendly and cheerful and try to make people feel good. Do those kind of things through life.

I had two or three close calls in my lifetime. I'm lucky, by golly, that I made it. One time when I was still in Watson, about the year we were getting ready to leave there. We used to always go on picnics on the railroad there, up to a place we called Wendella and Columbine. They were up on Baxter Pass and we and families and different ones would go up there to picnic. I was the only one of the family and my dad that was in Watson at that time and we decided to go with them that weekend. We'd get on that passenger train they had there and tie what we called two or three push cars. They were cars that would roll down on a grade. They didn't have an engine or anything on them, gasoline, they just rolled by themselves down the track. The track was about a five percent grade and would coast all the way down from the top of Baxter Pass to Watson, lickety split, in about two hours.

We went up there that Sunday and had our picnic and everything was going fine, in the meantime it started to rain, those cloudbursts, you know, would fill up those canyons and draws full of water. 'Course the railroad was about a third bridges anyway, winding up through those creeks and draws. Well, we got down below Dragon, nearly to Watson, and the water come out of a side canyon and washed out about two hundred feet of that track. We were coming down there at night and we couldn't see it. But the track, it had gone down a little. The water was still running there, just a-booming. It was about ten or twelve feet deep through there. That old wash was just level full. Well, I was sitting on a box on that little car. Byron Thomas, you've probably heard of him and his wife; Ernest Heaton, you probably heard of that name, runs stores and things at Jensen and around, and then he had a daughter here in Vernal. Well, he was on there, too. There was one or two others. Well, when they reached for the brake, they threw it too quick, got over where the tracks were washed out at the time. That box that I was on slid and pitched me off of the car out into that raging water.

The end of tape.